



Dr. Michael Gardam, CEO Health PEI
CC: Hon Minister Ernie Hudson, Minister of Health and Wellness

RE: The Health PEI Retention Incentive Program

Dear Dr. Gardam,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the 110 Medical Radiation Technologists (MRTs) of Prince Edward Island to address the exclusion of MRTs from the newly announced Health PEI Retention Incentive Program.

It was disheartening to see that these valuable professionals were excluded from the retention program. MRTs are the healthcare professionals who perform medical imaging and radiation therapy procedures across Prince Edward Island. Just like those health professionals you refer to in your communications, MRTs are working under immense pressure currently to help the PEI health system recovery from COVID and the effects of years of slowdowns and closures in their field. Despite the greatly expanded workload, MRTs are doing this without the benefit of extra staff or extra investment by the government into their areas of healthcare.

MRTs are now woefully understaffed compared to the demand for their services. In fact, over the last decade, in Prince Edward Island, the number of CT and MRI exams has risen by 42% and 17% respectively, but the number of MRTs performing these examinations has actually dropped by 1.8%. The same is true in radiation therapy, where 50% of cancer patients receive treatment. The 14% growth in demand over the last 5 years due to the aging population has been met with no corresponding investment in HR. Multiple sectors in Health PEI, have casual MRTs working full time hours, year-round, indicating that a need for increased FTE positions is necessary. The Health PEI retention program inclusion is based on vacancy rates. However, this measure is flawed when used on a profession this understaffed.

Understaffing and overwork have led to a concerning growth in burnout across the profession – nationally MRT burnout doubled between 2018 and 2021, with 64% of professionals now working through emotional exhaustion. Burnout seen at these levels, as you know from those professions mentioned in your communications, is a predecessor for departures and unfilled vacancies in a profession, something we are starting to see from the region and the country.

It is demoralizing for MRTs to be excluded time after time from programs that support nurses and a handful of other professions, and these demoralizing decisions are noted by our members as a contributor to their exhaustion. I implore you to re-examine the inclusion of this critical profession in this retention bonus program and any other programs you may have in planning stages.

The Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists – Atlantic (CAMRT-ATL) are the provider of association services for Prince Edward Island.



Just as importantly, we ask you and your colleagues in the health authority and the government to take steps now to evaluate the state of HR support for critical medical imaging and radiation therapy services and make the investments necessary to keep these indispensable aspects of health care viable for the people of Prince Edward Island into the future.

I would love the opportunity to discuss this further with you and Minister Hudson so that we can collaborate on long term solutions to this problem before the situation becomes more dire.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Carey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Carey M.Org.M, BHSc, RTR

Manager of CAMRT-ATL